Numb. 97

The TATLER.

By *Iſaac Bickerſtaff* Eſq;

Illud maxime rarum genus eſt eorum, qui aut excellente ingenii magnitudine, aut præclara eruditione atque doctrina, aut utraque re ornati, Spatium deliberandi habuerunt, quem potiſſimum vitæ curſum ſequi vellent. Tull. Offic.

From *Saturday November* 19. to *Tueſday November* 22. 1709.

From my own Apartment, November 21.

HAving ſwept away prodigious Multitudes in my laſt Paper, and brought a great Deſtruction upon my own Species, I muſt endeavour in this to raiſe freſh Recruits, and, if poſſible, to ſupply the Places of the Unborn and the Deceaſed. It is ſaid of *Xerxes*, That when he ſtood upon a Hill, and ſaw the whole Country round him covered with his Army, he burſt out in Tears, to think that not one of all that Multitude would be alive a Hundred Years after. For my Part, when I take a Survey of this populous City, I can ſcarce forbear weeping, to ſee how few of its Inhabitants are now living. It was with this Thought that I drew up my laſt Bill of Mortality, and endeavoured to ſet out in it the great Number of Perſons who have periſhed by a Diſtemper (commonly known by the Name of Idleneſs) which has long raged in the World, and deſtroys more in every great Town than the Plague has done at *Dantzick*. To repair the Miſchief it has done, and ſtock the World with a better Race of Mortals, I have more Hopes of bringing to Life thoſe that are young, than of reviving thoſe that are old. For which Reaſon, I ſhall here ſet down that noble Allegory which was written by an old Author called *Prodicus*, but recommended and embelliſhed by *Socrates*. It is the Deſcription of *Virtue* and *Pleaſure*, making their Court to *Hercules* under the Appearances of two beautiful Women.

When *Hercules*, ſays the divine Moraliſt, was in that Part of his Youth in which it was natural for him to conſider what Courſe of Life he ought to purſue, he one Day retired into a Deſart, where the Silence and Solitude of the Place very much favoured his Meditations. As he was muſing on his preſent Condition, and very much perplexed in himſelf on the State of Life he ſhould chuſe, he ſaw two Women of a larger Stature than ordinary approaching towards him. One of them had a very noble Air, and graceful Deportment; her Beauty was natural and eaſy, her Perſon clean and unſpotted, her Eyes caſt towards the Ground with an agreeable Reſerve, her Motion and Behaviour full of Modeſty, and her Raiment as white as Snow. The other had a great deal of Health and Floridneſs in her Countenance, which ſhe had helped with an artificial White and Red, and endeavoured to appear more graceful than ordinary in her Mien, by a Mixture of Affectation in all her Geſtures. She had a wonderful Confidence and Aſſurance in her Looks, and all the Variety of Colours in her Dreſs that ſhe thought were the moſt proper to ſhow her Complexion to an Advantage. She caſt her Eyes upon her ſelf, then turned them on thoſe that were preſent, to ſee how they liked her, and often looked on the Figure ſhe made in her own Shadow. Upon her nearer Approach to *Hercules*, ſhe ſtepped before the other Lady, (who came forward with a regular compoſed Carriage) and running up to him, accoſted him after the following Manner:

My dear *Hercules*, (ſays ſhe) I find you are very much divided in your own Thoughts upon the Ways of Life that you ought to chuſe: Be my Friend, and follow me; I'll lead you into the Poſſeſſion of Pleaſure, and out of the Reach of Pain, and remove you from all the Noiſe and Diſquietude of Buſineſs. The Affairs of either War or Peace ſhall have no Power to diſturb you. Your whole Employment ſhall be to make your Life eaſy, and to entertain every Senſe with its proper Gratification. Sumptuous Tables, Beds of Roſes, Clouds of Perfumes, Conſorts of Muſick, Crowds of Beauties, are all in a Readineſs to receive you. Come along with me into this Region of Delights, this World of Pleaſure, and bid Farewel for ever to Care, to Pain, to Buſineſs ——

Hercules hearing the Lady talk after this Manner, deſired to know her Name; to which ſhe anſwered, My Friends, and thoſe who are well acquainted with me, call me *Happineſs*; but my Enemies, and thoſe who would injure my Reputation, have given me the Name of *Pleaſure*.

By this Time the other Lady was come up, who addreſs'd her ſelf to the young Hero in a very different Manner.

Hercules, (ſays ſhe) I offer my ſelf to you, becauſe I know you are deſcended from the Gods, and give Proofs of that Deſcent by your Love to Virtue, and Application to the Studies proper for your Age. This makes me hope you will gain both for your ſelf and me an immortal Reputation. But before I invite you into my Society and Friendſhip, I will be open and ſincere with you, and muſt lay down this as an eſtabliſh'd Truth, That there is nothing truly valuable which can be purchaſed without Pains and Labour. The Gods have ſet a Price upon every real and noble Pleaſure. If you would gain the Favour of the Deity, you muſt be at the Pains of worſhiping him; if the Friendſhip of good Men, you muſt ſtudy to oblige them; if you would be honour'd by your Country, you muſt take Care to ſerve it. In ſhort, if you would be eminent in War or Peace, you muſt become Maſter of all the Qualifications that can make you ſo.

Theſe

These are the only Terms and Conditions upon which I can propose Happiness. The Goddess of *Pleasure* here broke in upon her Discourse; You see (said she) *Hercules*, by her own Confession, the Way to her Pleasures is long and difficult, whereas that which I propose is short and easy. Alas! (said the other Lady) whose Visage glowed with a Passion, made up of Scorn and Pity, What are the Pleasures you propose? To eat before you are hungry, drink before you are a-thirst, sleep before you are tired, to gratify Appetites before they are raised, and raise such Appetites as Nature never planted. You never heard the most delicious Musick, which is the Praise of one's self; nor saw the most beautiful Object, which is the Work of one's own Hands. Your Votaries pass away their Youth in a Dream of mistaken Pleasures, while they are hoarding up Anguish, Torment, and Remorse, for old Age.

As for me, I am the Friend of Gods and of good Men, an agreeable Companion to the Artizan, an Houshold Guardian to the Fathers of Families, a Patron and Protector of Servants, an Associate in all true and generous Friendships. The Banquets of my Votaries are never costly, but always delicious; for none eat or drink at them who are not invited by Hunger and Thirst. Their Slumbers are sound, and their Wakings chearful. My young Men have the Pleasure of hearing themselves praised by those who are in Years, and those who are in Years of being honoured by those who are young. In a Word, my Followers are favoured by the Gods, beloved by their Acquaintance, esteemed by their Country, and (after the Close of their Labours) honoured by Posterity.

We know by the Life of this memorable Hero, to which of these Two Ladies he gave up his Heart; and I believe, every one who reads this, will do him the Justice to approve his Choice.

I very much admire the Speeches of these Ladies, as containing in them the chief Arguments for a Life of Virtue or a Life of Pleasure that could enter into the Thoughts of an Heathen; but am particularly pleased with the different Figures he gives the Two Goddesses. Our modern Authors have represented Pleasure or Vice with an alluring Face, but ending in Snakes and Monsters: Here she appears in all the Charms of Beauty, tho' they are all false and borrowed; and by that Means, composes a Vision entirely natural and pleasing.

I have translated this Allegory for the Benefit of the Youth of *Great Britain*; and particularly of those who are still in the deplorable State of Non-Existence, and whom I most earnestly entreat to come into the World. Let my Embrio's shew the least Inclination to any single Virtue, and I shall allow it to be a Strugling towards Birth. I don't expect of them, that, like the Hero in the foregoing Story, they should go about as soon as they are born, with a Club in their Hands, and a Lion's Skin on their Shoulders, to root out Monsters, and destroy Tyrants; but as the finest Author of all Antiquity has said upon this very Occasion, Tho' a Man has not the Abilities to distinguish himself in the most shining Parts of a great Character, he has certainly the Capacity of being just, faithful, modest, and temperate.

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